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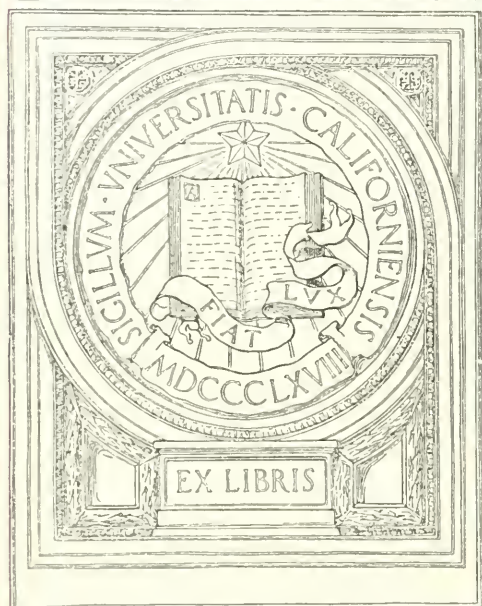


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THE JAY BIRDSON

International high commission. In 1916
delivered at the conference of the
International high commission at
Bueno Aires, Argentina, on April
4, 1916

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



64TH CONGRESS }
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SENATE

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No. 438 }

INTERNATIONAL HIGH COMMISSION

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED

AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL
HIGH COMMISSION AT BUENOS AIRES,
ARGENTINA, ON APRIL 4, 1916

BY

HON. W. G. McADOO

SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY
AND CHAIRMAN OF THE UNITED STATES SECTION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH COMMISSION

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INTERNATIONAL HIGH COMMISSION.

ADDRESS BY HON. W. G. McADOO.

Secretary of the Treasury and Chairman of the United States Section of the International High Commission.

MR. PRESIDENT, EXCELLENCIES, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH COMMISSION: It is with intense satisfaction and pleasure that the members of the United States section of the International High Commission find themselves in this beautiful and hospitable city, the capital of the noble Republic of Argentina, to join their colleagues of the International High Commission in a discussion of the vital problems that have brought us together. We are fortunate both in the time and the place of this meeting. In the time, because the necessity for the measures we are trying to secure was never more urgent; and in the place, because the progressive and stimulating ideals of the great people of the Argentine have created a favorable atmosphere in which the objects of the commission's labors will be sympathetically nurtured and developed.

THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH COMMISSION.

What is the reason for the International High Commission? It is the necessity for a continuing agency of a coordinating and directive character to accomplish, through the action of the several American States, the important reforms which, for the past twenty-five years, successive Pan American conferences have vainly recommended, and to bring about unity of action concerning numerous questions which have been developed by the progress of the world and emphasized by the European war.

PAN AMERICAN CONFERENCES.

The first Pan American Conference was held in Washington in 1889 and 1890; the second in Mexico City in 1902; the third in Rio de Janeiro in 1906; the fourth in Buenos Aires in 1910; and recently the Pan American Financial Conference in Washington in 1915. Upon reading the proceedings of these great conferences, all brilliantly intellectual and interesting, one is struck with the immense educational value of their work and the soundness of their conclusions and recommendations. Many of the most important subjects on the program of the present International High Commission were clarified and simplified by these conferences to such an extent that the labors of this commission will be greatly lessened. Our predecessors discussed arbitration of boundary disputes; the general doctrine of the gold standard; the necessity for uniformity of customs regulations and classifications of merchandise; uniformity of laws respecting bills of exchange; trade-marks, copyrights, and patents; banking facilities; improved ocean transportation facilities; the completion of an intercontinental railway connecting the Northern and Southern Continents. Some of the new questions we are to consider are those relating to bills of lading and warehouse receipts; arbitration of commercial disputes; stabilization of international exchange; exploitation of petroleum and mineral combustibles; improved cable facilities, reduced cable rates, and wireless telegraphy; the need for unifying protective legislation in behalf of labor and

laboring classes. So that we are not entering altogether upon original work in the discussions that are before us.

In spite of the highly educational work of these conferences, practical results have been small. After twenty-five years we have substantially the same problems; they are still unsolved; they remain a challenge to the constructive intelligence and enterprise of all the people of the American States.

What has been the chief reason for this failure? The answer seems clear. Not one of the conferences perfected an active organization under a central direction to continue the work in the intervals and fight unremittingly for the removal of the difficulties which have stood in the way of that wholesome and extensive development of inter-American relations, commercial, social, and political, fore-ordained as the destiny of the American Republics.

Resolutions of bodies of able and brilliant men are inherently effective only when they arouse those tidal waves of human interest and enthusiasm which, by their very momentum, carry the issues to success. It is seldom that such things occur. History records few instances of this sort, but it records many instances of achievement through persistent and intelligently organized effort.

THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAS.

The outbreak of the European war accentuated many of our problems and brought clearly home to the American Republics the danger of complete dependence upon the great European States for their economic development and commercial security. All of them, including the United States, faced at the beginning of the war possibilities of appalling disaster. That experience clearly shows the imperative necessity for closer relations between the American States themselves and a more enduring organization of their own life in order that they may work out their destinies, freed as far as possible from the dangers which constantly menace their economic development through European complications. It was essential in these circumstances that the American nations should take measures for their own protection; that they should reconstruct, as far as practicable, their commercial and financial relationships for the security of their own interests and the welfare of their people. It was not from any desire to take advantage of the misfortunes of the great nations of Europe with which the ties of friendship and commercial intercourse have been so strongly developed. These ties must continue, not only because we desire it but because we wish to serve Europe while we serve ourselves. To do this we must make ourselves so strong that when the smoke of battle has cleared and peace is restored to those stricken lands we may aid them as they have aided us in our time of need.

While these are our purposes, we should not be blind to the fact that economic changes of a revolutionary character must follow the colossal conflict now in progress and force readjustments of international relationships throughout the entire world. When this time comes the American nations must not be unprepared; they must begin now to shape their own future: they must take measures not only to secure their own interests but to put themselves in position to relieve the heavily burdened nations of Europe of many demands they have heretofore made upon them. It stands to reason that the destruction of capital and property and life during this great war will leave the contending nations prostrated for many

years. During the time of their recuperation they will be unable to play the important part in the economic development of the American States which they have played in the past. The noblest concepts of duty and friendship dictate that we should help them when the time comes to bind up their wounds and repair their losses. The attempt to organize the resources of the American States is conceived, therefore, in no selfish or unfriendly spirit. It is inspired by the highest motives of good will; it proceeds from a noble purpose to marshal their resources and make them in the highest degree available for the best service of mankind throughout the world.

HOW TO ACHIEVE PRACTICAL RESULTS.

It was in view of these weighty considerations and the necessity for early and positive action that the Pan American Financial Conference was called to convene in Washington in May, 1915. It was the firm resolve of those who directed that conference that a permanent organization should be created and charged with the duty of carrying into effect its conclusions and recommendations. This International High Commission, appointed by each of the American States, is the machinery devised by that conference for this purpose. The financial conference reaffirmed the necessity for action upon the various subjects which this commission is here to discuss, but left it to this commission to suggest the necessary laws and urge their enactment by the interested States.

The work of the International High Commission will be the connecting link between the successive Pan American Financial Conferences which, for my part, I earnestly hope may become a part of the permanent policy of the American States. If such a financial conference shall be held every two years, with the International High Commission as the intermediate working body to carry into effect the conclusions of these conferences, we will no longer live in the realm of theories, but will make practical results of every conference certain. The work of these financial conferences and of their adjunct, the International High Commission, is not of a diplomatic character. It does not, therefore, involve any conflict with the diplomatic organization of the different States. Its problems are not political; they are distinctively financial and commercial, and these are not primarily the subjects of diplomacy. It follows as an inevitable corollary that there is no conflict between the Pan American Union and the Pan American Financial Conference and the International High Commission. I am sure that I express the views of each and all of you when I say that the Pan American Union is realizing the high purpose for which it was created in the most thorough and satisfactory manner.

The importance of its contribution to international relations and to the service of interests of the most diversified types can not be exaggerated. This useful and splendid union is but in the infancy of its career, and I am sure that its work, under the wise guidance of the diplomatic representatives of the Pan American States, will continue to serve in the highest degree the best interests of the American States in the field in which it labors.

PERMANENT ORGANIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH COMMISSION.

The United States Section of the International High Commission has been established by act of the Congress and the necessary funds have been appropriated to enable it to maintain its organization and

do the work for which it was created. Presumably each country represented here has taken similar action with respect to its own commission.

How should the commission itself organize most effectively? If I may be permitted to suggest, I would say that each section should have a permanent chairman and secretary, with headquarters in some convenient city, preferably the capital of its own country. These various sections should be coordinated and directed through a central organization, consisting of a president, a vice president, and a secretary general of the International High Commission itself, whose headquarters should be in the capital of the country of which such president, vice president, and secretary general are citizens. This central organization should be charged with the general direction of the work and keep in constant touch with each section of the International High Commission. By this kind of cooperative effort we should endeavor to secure from the Governments concerned approval of the measures which may be agreed upon and recommended at the present session of the International High Commission.

ELIMINATE BARRIERS TO TRADE AND COMMERCE.

In the light of past experience and present necessity surely such reforms as are possible ought to be accomplished now, if they can be accomplished at all. They are so manifestly in the interest and to the advantage of each one of the American States that a determined effort should be made to secure prompt and conclusive action. Why should we, from indifference or neglect, continue laws, regulations, or practices which operate to the detriment of our respective countries? Why should we maintain barriers in the way of proper development of our trade and commerce when, by a mere stroke of the pen, so to speak, we can destroy them? Why should we diminish, if we do not actually prevent, the prosperity of millions of our fellow human beings in the various nations of the Americas because we do not permit that fair play of economic forces which, if released, would promote the prosperity of all?

These objects can not be attained in short order. Their very magnitude and complexity involve patience, persistence, zeal, and determination. What we seek is not impossible, as some pessimists insist. We have the power to make the seemingly impossible possible, if we know what we want and are resolved to achieve it. Let us, therefore, gentlemen, devote ourselves with all of the energy, intelligence, and enthusiasm we can command to the benevolent tasks before us. Let us proceed with the unalterable determination to translate these conclusions into the law of our respective States. Let it not be said that we have failed, as our predecessors have failed, to secure the remedies after we have ascertained what the remedies ought to be. We have a great and inspiring opportunity to render a service of incalculable benefit to all of the nations of the Western Hemisphere—an opportunity that appeals to the imagination, thrills the blood, and ennobles the thought. Let us determine our program and go forward with the inflexible courage and high purpose of a San Martín, a Bolívar, an Artigas, an O'Higgins, a Washington, and success can not escape us.

Laws alone will not, of course, create commerce or bring prosperity, although laws alone frequently destroy commerce and prevent prosperity; but beneficent laws will encourage commerce and contribute to prosperity by creating the conditions under which the individual

may work with security of life and property and engage in international trade without needless impediments. This being done, individual initiative and enterprise must always be relied upon as the chief factor to do the rest.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF PROSPERITY.

Trade between the peoples of the different nations of the earth rests upon the fundamentals of mutual confidence, good will, and respect. Nations, like individuals, find in the ties of friendship the best guaranty of peaceful and profitable intercourse. Happily the fundamental of friendship already exists between the American States, and we owe it to ourselves to reinforce that friendship with laws so harmonious that the citizens of our respective countries may have the fairest and freest opportunity to cultivate the most intimate relations with each other.

When this is done North American capital in abundance will seek opportunity to assist in the development of your wonderful resources. I imagine that the assistance of North American capital in your development will not be regarded as harmful to your interests. On the contrary, will it not be a helpful and conserving influence, beneficial alike to Latin America and to European investors in Latin America, if your development shall not be arrested or retarded for want of adequate capital? It is because we wish to use the power and resources of our country to help our neighbors, and because by helping them to strengthen themselves we steadily approach the realization of that ideal of American unity which has been for generations the dream of statesmen of both continents, that we are striving to do what our President so nobly expressed in his speech to the Pan American Financial Conference in Washington, May, 1915, when he said, "We are not trying to make use of each other, but we are trying to be of use to one another." This is the spirit of our national policy; this is the very essence of international morality—the Golden Rule of international intercourse.

TRANSPORTATION.

The problem of ocean transportation to which the Argentine Minister of Finance has referred is, beyond doubt, of paramount importance. For many years the American nations have blindly ignored their economic security, if not their physical safety, by depending almost entirely upon foreign ships for the transportation of their deep-sea commerce. Now, when a great war involves the leading maritime nations upon whose flags they relied, they find themselves without the essential means of protecting their own interests. We must correct this situation. The American nations must quickly find the way of creating a merchant marine of ample proportions to secure forever their physical and economic safety. The completion of the missing links of the great intercontinental railway is also of supreme importance and should be considered an indispensable feature of inter-American policy.

THE UNITED STATES AND LATIN AMERICA.

It is a significant and felicitous fact that the essential fundamental of friendship and mutual respect has always existed between the United States and the Latin American Republics. With the excep-

tion of the War with Mexico in 1847, the great Republic of the North has been at peace with every Central and South American State from the beginning of their existence to the present time.

The United States has consistently and unceasingly manifested deep interest in the welfare of the Latin American Republics. This found its first expression in the Monroe doctrine, enunciated by one of our great Presidents not only for the protection of the United States, but for the preservation of the struggling Republics of the Western Hemisphere in the days of their infancy.

More recently the Government of the United States has given fresh and convincing evidence of its friendly attitude toward and its high appreciation of the Latin American States. In the unfortunate complications in Mexico we have accepted the friendly advice and assistance of the Republics of South America. It was the ambassadors of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile and the ministers of Bolivia, Uruguay, and Guatemala who, in response to the request of our Government, contributed so patriotically, unselfishly, and nobly to the effort to solve the Mexican problem with due regard to the rights of the nations and the interests of the people of suffering Mexico.

These notable events have given new point and importance to inter-American relations. They have served to make more convincing and clear the attitude of the United States toward all the nations of the Western Hemisphere. They have reaffirmed those noble sentiments of friendship expressed by our great President in his speech at Mobile in 1913, and have given new emphasis to his statement on that occasion that the United States "will never again seek one additional foot of territory by conquest." To this added force has been given by the recent declarations of our illustrious President and our distinguished Secretary of State in favor of mutual guarantees of the territorial integrity and political independence under republican forms of government of every nation of the American Continent.

With such guarantees we do not have to live in fear of each other; we do not have to suspect each other; we do not need to arm against each other, because so long as there is assurance against loss of territory or independence by any nation on this continent we can work out our destinies in peace, undisturbed by internal fear or external aggression. Contrast this with the state of affairs in unhappy Europe, where race oppressions, race hatreds, national wrongs, extending through the centuries, have created the disastrous conditions of mutual distrust and suspicion which have turned the leading nations into armed camps and precipitated the most colossal conflict in the history of time.

It would seem as if in the very wisdom of God the American Continent was created as a refuge where men of all nations might, in the spirit of true fraternity, build new States, dedicated to liberty, justice, and humanity, as an example to the world of the regenerative forces of mankind; where, freed from the passions and hatreds of centuries, they may demonstrate the ability of man to live in peace and amity, exemplifying the loftiest ideals of liberty and humanity, settling no disputes by the sword but by the light of God's justice alone, and developing a civilization which will fulfill the mission for which Christ died more than 1,900 years ago. God grant that our beloved America may realize this dream and stand, for time and eternity, as the exemplar and champion of international rectitude and honor!



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